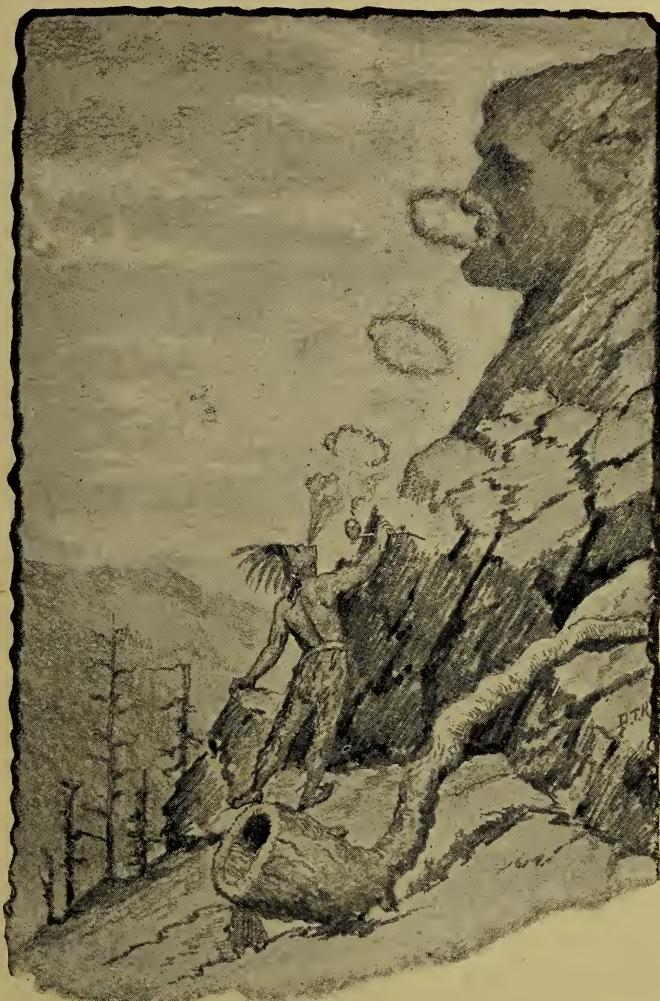


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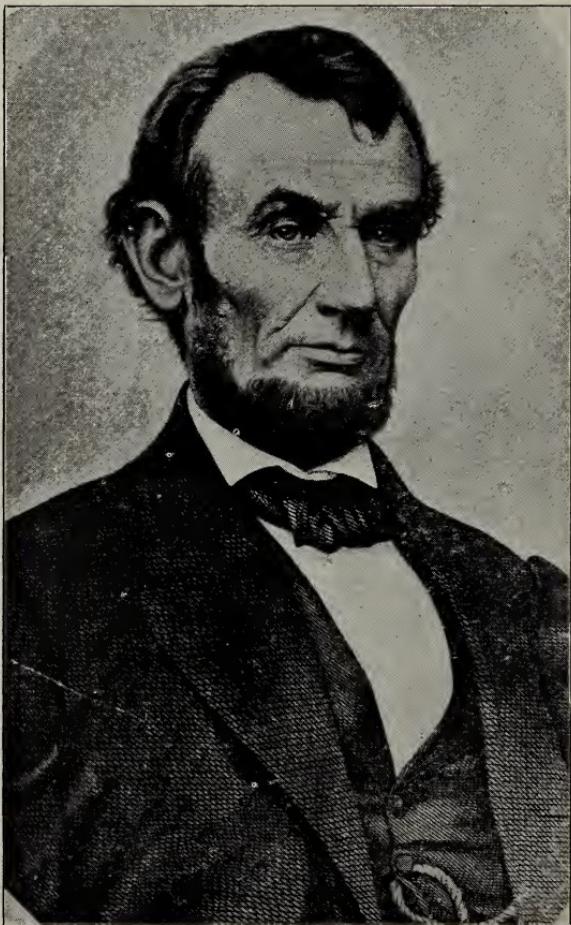
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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

# Abraham Lincoln

By L. ASHTON THORP

An Address Delivered before the Sons of Veterans,  
February 12, 1908

**H**E WHO reads the Story of Liberty—who studies the stirring and tragic history of the upward toil of man from slavery—must concede a connection between human events and the infinite. As Memnon's melodies continued to greet the rising sun in spite of Cambryses, who, resolved to learn its secret, cleft the black statue from head to waist—so has the song of freedom echoed down the ages, defying the racks and gibbets, and all efforts of tyranny to stifle its utterance in response to the summons of the morning. Whether dwelling in the deep abyss or standing on Fortune's crowning slope, "with unwearied fingers drawing out the threads," some unseen power has presided over the destinies of man.

We deny that it was Chance which called Washington to the command of the Continental Army, and out of the dim aisles of the forest led Abraham Lincoln to be the President of the United States. Born in a log cabin in Kentucky, his early history embodied only in the short and simple annals of the poor, he arose from the low estate in which his life began to become "the pillar of a people's hope, the centre of a world's desire."

The father of Abraham Lincoln, living among people comprising the slave holding aristocracy on the one hand and the "poor whites" on the other, found little to encourage a man of intelligence, who was possessed of a simple education and no capital, and in 1817 he removed with his family from Kentucky to Indiana. Amid a clearing in the wilderness, a pioneer home was built of logs, and here also

the family endured the fatigues and discouragement of privation and toil.

Lincoln was nine years of age when his mother died, and his melancholy musings, engendered by this sad event, followed him all the days of his life. I can imagine no happening filled with deeper pathos, no occurrence more likely to leave its ineffaceable impress upon the mind of a child, than to be left alone in the vast solitude of a new country, in the shadow of the forest primeval, by the side of a mother's grave.

Schools were few in number and books were precious things to the boys and girls in this sparsely settled region. Lincoln learned to read from his mother, but it is said his time at school did not exceed twelve months altogether. He obtained the greater part of his education in the broad university of Nature's realm, whose deep and vital truths became the mainspring of his sublime character and his magic influence over the hearts and consciences of his generation.

In 1830, Thomas Lincoln, the father, removed with his family to Illinois. Abraham Lincoln, clad mostly in skins, transported the household effects in an ox team.

Thirty years later, this "divinely gifted man" was called "to mould a mighty state's decrees."

Time will not permit of dwelling upon the early period of the strangely fascinating life of Abraham Lincoln. Suffice it to say that he served throughout the Black Hawk War, was subsequently elected to the Legislature, admitted to the bar, married, and sent to Congress in 1846. On January 16, 1849, he introduced a bill to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia and providing for compensation to the slave owners.

When the nation was stirred to its foundation by the agitation for the repeal of the "Missouri Compromise," he became the leader of the new Republican Party in Illinois, and in 1858 was defeated for the United States Senate by Stephen A. Douglass; but, in accepting the nomination for

that high position, he reaffirmed the ancient truth that "A house divided against itself cannot stand," and proclaimed throughout the broad land the knell of American human slavery, that "this government cannot endure half slave and half free."

Upon that rock the Republican Party planted itself, and time crept swiftly toward that thrilling point where Abraham Lincoln crossed the line into the domain of imperishable history.

Remembering the Scriptural warning that whosoever shall take the sword shall perish by the sword, he forced the South to assume the aggressive, and when the opening guns of the mighty struggle made the whole world stand aghast, the madness and folly of the South had precipitated the issue in which was involved not only our national existence but, as Abraham Lincoln succinctly expressed it, the experiment of popular government in this age and perhaps for all time.

His inaugural address was a calm and dispassionate discussion of the grave questions which threatened to disrupt the Union. His desire for peace pervaded every line and, with an abiding tenderness born of love, he concluded his address with words which will echo down the centuries as a choral harmony:

"I am loth to close. We are not enemies but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriotic grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

Lincoln strove, first of all, to avert from the republic those evils which the great expounder of the Constitution, Daniel Webster, foresaw with prophetic eye as the consequence of disunion sentiment—states dissevered, discordant, belligerent, and drenched with fraternal blood; and in

the accomplishment of that object he cemented the Union with bands of steel never to be broken, and garlanded the temple of liberty with wreaths of universal freedom.

He gave reality to the Declaration of Independence, which Washington hoped for and the founders of the republic earnestly desired, but which the cupidity of men for years had conspired to delay.

The first gun once fired, it became primarily the aim of Lincoln not so much to eradicate slavery as to imperishably cement the threatened republic, but notwithstanding his first thought was for the preservation of the Union, he realized from the beginning that the institution of slavery must be destroyed.

He was great enough to understand that "no man is good enough to govern another without the other's consent," and wise enough to know that,

"In giving freedom to the slave,  
We assure freedom to the free."

While running as one of the presidential electors, in 1856, he said:

"Sometimes, when I am speaking, I feel that the time is soon coming when the sun shall shine and the rain fall on no man who shall go forth to unrequited toil. How it will come about, when it will come, I cannot tell; but that time will surely come."

With prophetic vision, he was paving the way for the Emancipation Proclamation. The erection of the pioneer cabin to which Lincoln, the child, came on the 12th of February, 1809, marked the beginning of the epoch which saw the passing of the lowly cabin of Uncle Tom.

The Emancipation Proclamation was the sublime and inevitable result of all argument upon the question of slavery. After all other means had been exhausted, after gradual and compensated emancipation had been proposed and rejected, when the question had narrowed to one of universal freedom or the unconditional perpetuity of slavery, when to mention it rendered its discussion almost

a work of supererogation—the great emancipator gave his proclamation to the world, and invoked thereon the considerate judgment of mankind.

The Emancipation Proclamation was essentially a war measure. The President in his civil capacity had no power to abrogate the laws of states or to free the slaves. Lincoln issued his proclamation as commander in chief of the army of occupation in the states which were in open rebellion against federal authority; but slavery was not legally abolished until the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution was adopted.

From the moment the proclamation of the great emancipator was issued, the struggle became a re-baptized crusade for the liberation of a race. From Magna Charta to the Emancipation Proclamation, men had struggled for their own rights, but in the whole story of human liberty no people had ever borne arms for the freedom of another people.

It remained for the soldiers of the Grand Army of the Republic to consummate the sublimest act which had ever appealed to the conscience of mankind.

To-night our hearts expand toward the colossal grandeur of Lincoln's soul. As a pebble striking the surface of the lake will send its wavelets to the farther shore, so the influence of Lincoln's life continues to broaden and widen and become more potent as this nation pursues its mighty way.

He was a man of imagination. He realized better than all others the awful cost of war. He sought to avert it with all his marvellous statecraft, and when the crisis came he felt the anxiety of every father and mother whose son was in the field or who were bereft of their boy by the grim mandate of the god of war.

He was as great a statesman as ever "shaped the whisper of a throne." Master of the English tongue, he never uttered a word or sentence that ever recoiled upon its projector. Truthfulness, open-heartedness and

honesty characterized his entire life, and yet he was one of the shrewdest diplomats of his day and generation.

He was the champion of Union and Freedom when the two seemed utterly inconsistent, and never lost faith when both seemed hopeless. At the head of this great nation, in a crisis where precedents were worthless and no man could forecast the future, his conduct was governed by the events of the day as they appealed to his love of justice and keen sense of the fitness of things, and he lived to see his "sandy footprints harden into stone."

Beneath the rule of a man entirely great, the North was able to maintain its position against a united world, and establish on this continent a perpetual physical and intellectual freedom which no power of the universe can fetter for a single instant.

His matchless mind transcended the thoughts of those about him. No man was ever more thoroughly misunderstood at times than was Abraham Lincoln, even by those who shared his confidence. There was never an hour while he occupied the chair of state that he was not distrusted by some, maligned by others.

He was too conservative to please the extreme abolitionists and his policies were too radical to find approval with the Northern Democrats. In 1864, the cry was raised that Lincoln was contending for empire and the Democratic convention demanded cessation of hostilities and declared that the war was a failure. The day after the Chicago Convention, on the 29th of August, 1864, Sherman took Atlanta, which was soon followed by the brilliant achievements of Farragut in Mobile Bay, and, as Secretary Seward so aptly expressed it, "Sherman and Farragut have knocked the planks out of the Chicago platform."

In spite of all opposition, in spite of calumny and hate, with uncommon patience, he pursued the even tenor of his course, every step of which has been justified by "the considerate judgment of mankind."

While alert to grasp an opportunity, he never prodded

Destiny. He was content to drift with the tide until he struck the right current to act obedience to his will. He moved with events and always kept his hand upon the popular pulse.

Bancroft said of him: "As a child in a dark night, on a rugged way, catches hold of the hand of its father for guidance and support, he clung fast to the hand of the people, and moved calmly through the gloom."

That is not strictly true. He had an abiding faith in the people, but the minds of the masses "swayed to him from their orbits as they moved." He was, first and last, the real leader. He brought them by ways they knew not. He made darkness light before them and crooked things straight. These things he did unto them, and they did not forsake him.

He waited for the tidings of victory before proclaiming the freedom of the slave. When he wrote the celebrated letter to Horace Greeley, in which he stated that his primary object was the preservation of the Union; that he would save the Union with slavery, if he could; that if it was necessary to destroy slavery in order to save the Union he would; that he would do what was necessary to save the Union—his pen had already drawn the Emancipation Proclamation and he was awaiting only an opportunity to announce it to the world—an opportunity which followed Antietam and turned 4,000,000 of chattel slaves along the highway to freedom.

He was truly a great lawyer—not learned in authorities, unfettered by precedents, scorning to take advantage of technicalities and the tricks of the cunning artificer—familiar with the fundamental truths that underlie successful government, possessed of a stern and impelling sense of duty, reverencing the law and standing always for the rights of man.

He was an adept at analyzing a case, quick to grasp the strong points, a master of logic, an incomparable pleader. He was not a case lawyer. The well-appointed

law offices, the reports, digests and encyclopedias which place the learned decisions, the landmarks of the law, within arm's reach of the modern attorney, were advantages which Lincoln never dreamed of as he prepared himself to ride the circuit and match his legal mind against the keenest intellects of Illinois.

He was not a polished advocate—not made “to court an amorous looking-glass.” He could plead for justice, for human rights and liberties. He could defend against what he himself believed would be a violation of his client's rights, and whatever he stated as facts he believed were facts. But he would not attempt to make others believe what he himself did not believe. Into a cause in which he believed, he threw himself with unconscious eloquence, forgetting all else but his case in his zeal to vindicate the truth and making his audience forget his ungainly form and awkward delivery by the irresistible force of his logic.

His speeches in the Lincoln-Douglass debates run parallel with the arguments of Webster, defining for all time rights of individuals and states under the Constitution and the flag.

He had wonderful wit and humor, which served him as both shield and foil. His homely thrusts, instead of wounding, were rather as the soft answer which turneth away wrath. I have thought, too, that his ready wit acted as ballast for his “darker musings, stealing away their sharpness ere he was aware.” His kindly humor has come down to us in countless stories, illustrating his wonderful command of situations and of men. Not infrequently it was his best diplomacy, obtaining forgiveness for some fancied wrong because of the humor of some pertinent story or remark.

Lincoln was by nature an extremely sad and melancholy man. Upon his shoulders he bore the weight of centuries of tyranny, cruelty and crime, and in his great, loving heart were the chords of sympathy, stretching from

every battlefield and patriot grave and every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land. Contemplating the deep and pathetic furrows of his kindly face, he seems always to have had a premonition of the tragic end.

The state papers and many of the speeches of Lincoln are classics, and will occupy a prominent place in the living literature of the world so long as the pen and human voice, raised in defense of human rights and liberties, shall kindle patriotic fires or wake responsive echoes in the heart and brain of man.

The immortal speech at Gettysburg is a sacred hymn in every American home which furnished its name to the honor roll of fallen heroes.

He was a wonderful strategist. To his expansive mind the seat of war was a chess board, which he studied with the military genius of a Napoleon, "guiltless of his country's blood." He pondered every move and foresaw results with unerring accuracy. Sometimes his magnanimity triumphed over his better judgment, as when he placed Hooker in command of the Army of the Potomac. In his memorable letter to General Hooker, he said:

"I have placed you at the head of the army, but I think that during your predecessor's command you have thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country. I have heard of your recently saying that both the army and the country needed a dictator. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship.

"I much fear that the spirit you have aided in infusing into the army will now turn upon you."

He feared it was a mistake, and the result, as clearly foreshadowed, was the failure of Hooker and the humiliation of Chancellorsville.

Abraham Lincoln was not perfect. He "looked all native to his place, and yet on tiptoe seemed to touch upon a sphere too gross to tread—interpreter between the gods and men."

Full of tenderness and humanity, he could not resist the temptation to pardon. With him, the quality of mercy was not strained. It descended as the rain from heaven upon the imprisoned and condemned. The Secretary of War and the commanding generals complained that the discipline and efficiency of the army was endangered by so many pardons. Lincoln realized the necessity of strict discipline in the service and often resorted to subterfuge in saving life, as when he telegraphed General Butler to suspend execution in the case of a soldier sentenced to be shot, "*until further orders from me.*" Then, turning to the father of the boy, he said: "If your son lives until they get further orders from me, when he does die, people will say that old Methusaleh was a baby compared to him."

He lived long enough to know that the blood shed in the name of liberty had not been shed in vain; to see the Rebellion crushed, Liberty triumphant, and to hear, as the rush of many waters, the hymns of thanksgiving rising from the throats of the enfranchised slaves; to see the fetters which he had decreed should be forever broken crumble into fragments, never more to be welded together.

He lived to behold the gorgeous ensign of the Republic floating in every wind under the whole heavens, still full high advanced; its arms and trophies streaming in all their original lustre; not a stripe erased or polluted, not a single star obscured.

And then, with malice toward none, with charity for all, he passed to his eternal abiding place in the hearts of his countrymen, sealing with his blood the unity of the Republic.

I have often thought that the assassin's bullet, striking him down just when the Union had been saved and pinned together with the bayonet, dastardly as the crime was in itself, presented the supreme sacrifice required to soften the bitterness and resentment, and indelibly impress upon the North and South the frightful cost of fratricidal strife.

The cruel wounds began to heal when the great and loving Lincoln fell, and the nations of the old world mingled their tears with the lamentations of a reunited people. The memory of Abraham Lincoln rises like incense from the altar of liberty, and Destiny, emerging from his tomb, beckoned the nation onward and upward on its mission as the standard bearer of liberty to the oppressed of all the world.

The name of Abraham Lincoln will be handed down to our descendants as the noblest of Presidents, without parallel in history or equal in men.

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## “Arvin’s Pitch”

A True Incident

By OLIVE E. NIMS

AND this is ‘Arvin’s Pitch,’ ” said my friend, as we came along to a large white rock in the side of a steep hill. “ Didn’t I ever tell you how it got its name? When the town charter was first granted, the town was laid out in sections and the ones to whom the grant was made had the right of choosing any section or pitch of land they pleased. Several of the early settlers were looking over the town, before they made their ‘pitches,’ and chanced to be standing on this very rock. One of this party, Arvin Aldrich, stepped too near the edge and pitched headlong down the steep bank. ‘ Well,’ he said, on getting up, ‘ I pitched in a little different way than I expected, but I’ll stick to it. This “pitch” here, gentlemen, is mine.’ So the name of ‘Arvin’s Pitch’ still clings to this rock.”

